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PP RUEHBC RUEHDA RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK
DE RUEHGB #0062/01 0111021
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 111021Z JAN 09
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1171
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON DC//NSC// PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL//CCJ2// PRIORITY

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 BAGHDAD 000062

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [IZ](#) [MARR](#) [MCAP](#) [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [PNAT](#) [PTER](#)
SUBJECT: ACTION REQUEST: U.S. WEAPONS RELEASE TO IRAQ -
F-16 AIRCRAFT

REF: LETTER OF REQUEST FOR PRICE AND AVAILABILITY FOR
PURCHASE OF THIRTY SIX (36) F-16 AIRCRAFT
FROM IRAQI MINISTRY OF DEFENSE DATED 27 AUG
2008

¶1. (U) This is an action request, see paragraph 11.

¶2. (SBU) Summary: The Country Team requests the approval for the sale of thirty-six (36) F-16 block 50/52 aircraft and associated equipment and munitions to the Government of Iraq (GOI). This sale will continue to build the Iraqi Air Force (IQAF), under the guidance of Coalition Forces and the Iraqi Ministry of Defense, to a level adequate to defend against the internal threats that insurgents pose to Iraq's indigenous population, as well as IQAF's operational capability to deter and defend against external threats to GOI's security. This sale will further enhance interoperability with Coalition air forces. End Summary.

Description of Technology for Release

¶3. (SBU) This aircraft system sale would include the following technological systems and features:

- APG-68(v)9 radar with synthetic aperture radar is provided as standard equipment on the F-16 block 50/52 aircraft.
- Generation III targeting pods provide precise, day/night targeting capability to more effectively execute counterterrorism operations.
- An internal electronic warfare suite as sold to other F-16 customers would provide a modern self-defense capability and would free up an external centerline station for an additional fuel tank while reducing drag.
- The Link-16 secure data-link system will maximize interoperability with US and NATO forces.
- GPS/PPS capability is required for inclusion of the embedded GPS/INS avionics unit and is also a baseline requirement for JDAM.
- IFF with Mode IV will provide the IQAF with the ability to operate in a coalition environment and is a theater baseline requirement for release of AMRAAM.
- AMRAAM munitions will provide the IQAF with an air-to-air defense missile commensurate with the capabilities of the block 50/52 F-16 aircraft.
- GBU-31 and GBU-38 JDAM munitions will provide the IQAF with the necessary precision guided munitions to more effectively

combat terrorists in Iraq.

- CBU-130 and CBU-105 wind corrected munitions will provide the IQAF with more accurate weapons deliveries against terrorism targets.

Rationale for Technology Release

¶4. (SBU) The IQAF currently has no inventory of tactical fighter aircraft or precision guided munitions capabilities. F-16 block 50/52s incorporating modern data links, navigation systems, targeting pods, and beyond-visual-range missiles are necessary for the GOI to participate in Coalition training, exercises and operations, and to operate a modern air defense network. This sale will complement the IQAF's existing procurement of flight screening and primary trainer aircraft in preparation for the F-16 weapon system. The updated aircraft will improve Iraq's operational flexibility and allow the IQAF to integrate its assets in Coalition operations and future bilateral and multilateral exercises. Releasing the F-16s to Iraq will also reduce the IQAF need to turn to non-U.S. suppliers for its emerging fighter requirements, and will further build a U.S.-Iraq military-to-military aviation relationship for decades to come.

Iraq Safeguarding Sensitive Technology

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¶5. (SBU) Iraq has demonstrated the intent and ability to protect sensitive, classified military technology since working with U.S. and Coalition forces. An Article 505 agreement (signed by the GOI July 24, 2004) demonstrates Iraq's commitment to protect grant defense articles and technology similar to our standards. Additionally, a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for compliance for the storage, security and inventory of all sensitive items of equipment and materiel was signed by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense on November 18, 2005. MNF-I will continue to train and mentor the IQAF in the proper use, protection, and safeguarding of sensitive technologies as they continue to demonstrate this maturity and intent. MNF-I will also obtain all necessary formal agreements with the GOI before transferring any sensitive equipment or technology. Lastly, MNF-I will continue to carry out a robust Enhanced End Use Monitoring (EEUM) program while executing this force modernization effort.

Anticipated Reaction from Neighboring Nations

¶6. (SBU) The GOI's request for F-16s has prompted some internal opposition from leaders in the country's Kurdish region, as well as opposition from neighboring nations in the Middle East. While Iraq's military has become more competent, the Shia-dominated central government continues to arouse suspicion among some sects and to face internal competition in a developing political environment. The rapid regeneration of Iraqi Security Forces with equipment of U.S. origin such as F-16s is also likely to be viewed with concern by other countries in the region. The Parliament of Kuwait has openly expressed concerns about Iraqi military procurement which are likely to increase with this sale.

¶7. However, we assess that this sale will not materially affect the military balance of power in the region. Even with the F-16 block 50/52 system, Iraq still has a ways to go before achieving air power parity with the Gulf States and Iran. Iraq's U.S.-allied neighbors, Israel and Saudi Arabia,

each fly hundreds of modern military aircraft. The Israeli Air Force operates F-16s, as do Jordan, Egypt, Turkey, the UAE, Oman and Bahrain. Release of this system would move Iraq's military capabilities incrementally closer to those of its regional neighbors and would be more likely to increase the level of stability in the region. The concerns are to be expected and reinforce the need to closely monitor end use of the F-16 weapon system, but are not judged sufficient to prevent the release of the aircraft.

Iraq's Political Importance to the Region

¶8. (SBU) A stable, democratically-elected Iraqi government, capable of protecting its people and sovereignty, and remaining at peace with its neighbors is one of the USG's highest priorities. The release and employment of F-16s will facilitate progress toward this goal by advancing the Iraqi Security Forces' ability to provide security against anti-Iraqi forces, while significantly reducing the risk to themselves and the population. F-16s will improve the capability and interoperability of the IQAF, increase deterrence against air attack from potential threats, and enhance Iraq's ability to monitor its border regions during the day and night. The increased capability will allow for a greater IQAF role in Coalition training, exercises and operations, which will increase Iraq's interoperability with the rest of the world's modernized air forces.

Source of Financing and Economic Impact

¶9. (SBU) This purchase will be financed by Government of Iraq funds. The cost is pending official price and availability data. We do not envision that approval of this technology release will adversely affect either Iraqi or U.S. programmed funding. There is no significant economic impact anticipated to be generated by this sale.

Relevant Human Rights Considerations

¶10. (SBU) There are no human rights considerations that

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should preclude the release of the defense equipment to the Iraqi Armed Forces.

Action Request

¶11. (SBU) We request immediate Washington approval for the release of 36 F-16 block 50/52 aircraft to the Government of Iraq.
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